

**Opening Statement of Chairwoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) as prepared  
Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection  
Committee on Homeland Security**

*“Lost in the Shuffle: Examining TSA’s Management of Surface Transportation Security  
Inspectors”*

Wednesday, July 28, 2010, at 3:30 p.m.  
311 Cannon House Office Building

We are here today to discuss TSA’s management of the central piece of its surface transportation security efforts: the Surface Transportation Security Inspection Program.

TSA has been tasked with a complex and evolving mission: to secure our transportation systems while maintaining the healthy movement of goods, services, and people.

Since it was created nearly a decade ago in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, TSA has focused the vast majority of its resources and assets on aviation security.

Clearly, the threat to aviation is still present, but TSA cannot ignore the obvious trend of terrorist attacks on surface transportation assets worldwide.

Our domestic transit, bus, and rail systems have thus far been spared, but terrorist attacks in Spain, Great Britain, India, and Russia over the last few years have emphasized how critical these systems are to protecting large urban areas.

The attacks we have witnessed abroad have been well executed with devastating consequences. They demonstrate that securing a surface environment presents unique obstacles and vulnerabilities that do not exist in other modes.

The Zazi New York City case was a chilling reminder that American transit systems, like those in Europe and Asia, are enticing targets for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

We must be vigilant. We must be prepared.

Our Nation’s mass transit and passenger rail systems provide 34 million passenger trips each weekday, compared to the 1.7 million passengers flying daily on commercial domestic and international flights.

Yet 85% of TSA’s resources are dedicated to aviation security, while just over 1% is dedicated to surface transportation security.

This disparity calls into question TSA’s commitment to implementing effective surface security programs.

TSA’s Surface Transportation Security Inspection Program is authorized in section 1304 of the 9/11 Act, which outlines specific parameters for the mission and make-up of surface inspectors.

In February 2009, the DHS Inspector General released a report on the Effectiveness of TSA’s Surface Transportation Security Inspectors that raised serious concerns about TSA’s deployment of surface inspector resources.

The report found that the program was understaffed for the long term, and that an aviation-focused command structure had undermined the quality and morale of the workforce.

Although TSA concurred with one of the three I-G recommendations, there has been little evidence of progress made by TSA in implementing them.

Largely based on the I-G's findings and recommendations, a robust provision addressing the surface inspector program was included in our TSA Authorization bill, H.R. 2200, which passed the House by an overwhelming bipartisan majority in June 2009.

However, over the past year TSA has implemented new changes to the surface inspector program that ignore these efforts, and further changes are being implemented under an initiative called "TSI Evolution," which significantly re-defines surface inspector activities and training.

We are concerned that TSI Evolution minimizes the importance of the surface-focused mission and expertise required by statute in order to re-make surface inspectors into "jack-of-all-trades" first responders who will be deployed to all transportation modes.

Currently, new surface inspectors are required to complete 2 weeks of aviation and cargo training, but are only given 1 week of surface mode training.

Even as it implements these changes, TSA has still not completed a staffing plan, or any risk-based assessment to demonstrate how TSI Evolution will enhance security.

Further complicating matters is the challenge presented by forthcoming security regulations required by the 9/11 Act – rules on frontline employee security training and security assessments for surface modes are more than 2 years overdue.

These rules will drastically change the security landscape for surface transportation systems, and will likely require an expansion of surface inspector workforce, making the completion of a staffing assessment all the more imperative.

I have met with the new TSA Administrator, Mr. Pistole, who shares my concern about improving our surface security efforts, and I look forward to working with him to make this happen.

We are in a new era for TSA, and with hard work and determination, a new era also for surface transportation security.